Critical & Analytical Essays

Domestic Porosity and the Transcultural Uncanny in Select Japanese and Indian Folk Narratives

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Editor's Note:

Terror, in the Japanese folk narratives examined here, does not arrive from without but surfaces from within the familiar. This essay reads figures such as Yuki-Onna and Futakuchi Onna alongside South Asian serpent-lover myths and A. K. Ramanujan's framework of the contextual self, situating the uncanny not as a culturally specific phenomenon but as a transcultural logic of boundary, substitution, and the return of what domestic order seeks to contain.

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Abstract

This essay examines how Japanese folk narratives produce the uncanny not through spectacular supernatural intrusion but through subtle disturbances within domestic life. Drawing on Freud's concept of the uncanny and Kristeva's theory of abjection, the study explores how familiar spaces (such as household) become porous environment where boundaries between human, spirit, and object begin to dissolve. Close readings of the Japanese tales of "Yuki-Onna" and "Futakuchi Onna" demonstrate how secrecy, appetite, and bodily transformation destabilize the apparent stability of domestic order. The snow-woman's silent return as wife reveals how intimacy may conceal alterity, while the hidden mouth of Futakuchi Onna exposes the tensions between bodily need and social expectations of restraint. The analysis extends comparatively to Girish Karnad's Nāga-Mandala and Abanindranath Tagore's Khirer Putul, where serpent lovers and edible dolls function as mythic substitutions that articulate otherwise inexpressible domestic anxieties. Japanese traditions of

animated dolls (ningyō) further illustrate how objects may serve as vessels of memory and spiritual presence. Across these narratives, the uncanny emerges through symbolic substitutions that transform landscapes, bodies, animals, and objects into alternative forms of life. The article argues that folklore imagines domestic space as fundamentally relational, where human identity remains permeable to nonhuman forces.

Keywords: Uncanny; Mythopoeic Substitution; Domestic Space; Ningyō; Comparative Folklore

In many Japanese folk narratives, terror becomes active through a subtle disturbance of the familiar. A wife eats almost nothing or a mother reappears carrying a dead child; and the stories start taking shapes from inside their emptiness. Those images do not belong only to the spectacular domain of horror but to the intimate terrain of the everyday. The uncanny in Japanese folklore are not from the intrusion of the supernatural into reality rather from the unsettling recognition that the ordinary selves may harbor otherworldly potential. Sigmund Freud's formulation of the uncanny as the return of whatever is repressed yet once familiar provides a crucial interpretive entry point. The uncanny, he argues, arises when something previously known and very intimate reappears in estranged form, producing a peculiar mixture of recognition and dread (Freud 124). Such experiences destabilize the boundary between the feelings of homely ('heimlich') and the unhomely ('unheimlich'), revealing the fragile structures of psychic security. The sense of abject may emerge when the border between inside and outside collapses. The hidden returns to visibility with disturbing identities, (dis)order, and meaning. Characters appear in tales featuring hidden mouths, elongated necks, or spectral maternal bodies, where bodily containment fails and the self is rendered porous. Anthropological perspectives identify such anxieties as culturally structured and therefore psychological. The cultural logic of certain narratives is inseparable from Japanese aesthetic traditions. Carmen Blacker observes that Japanese religious practice assumes the permeability of worlds with mountains, ritual sites, and ancestral rites serving as points of contact

between the living and the dead. Spirit visitation is therefore not an anomaly but an extension of relational matrix (112). Noriko Reider likewise notes that demonic figures often represent forms of social and existential otherness, embodying anxieties about exclusion, and alterity. Such figures destabilize not only the boundary between human and nonhuman but also the boundary between social belonging and exclusion.

Japanese aesthetic philosophy shapes the affective texture of the uncanny. Yuriko Saito argues that Japanese aesthetics integrates moral sensibility into everyday life, encouraging respect and attentiveness toward both human and nonhuman presences (29). This kind of ethical attentiveness may heighten sensitivity to disturbance when the ordinary world is disrupted, and the disturbance is felt as a moral and affective dissonance. Complementing this sensibility is the aesthetic valorization of imperfection and transience in which weathering, incompletion, and ephemerality are embraced as signs of temporal depth and natural process (Saito 383). The fleeting presence of the snow-woman or the dissolving boundary between life and death thus resonates with an aesthetic philosophy that recognizes impermanence as intrinsic to beauty. Within this cultural and theoretical threads, mythic narratives encode prohibited desires, anxieties, and contradictions through symbolic displacement. Rather than representing transgression directly, folklore renders it narratable through substitutions. Such mythopoeic substitution functions as a cultural tendency that allows socially unspeakable tensions to be articulated within narrative form.

While the uncanny manifests differently across cultures, its structural logic of the disturbance of boundaries and the return of what has been suppressed resonates transculturally. Comparative insights from South Asian serpent-lover myths or several other domestic secrecy codes reveal analogous strategies of substitution and containment. A.K. Ramanujan's observation that cultural selves may operate contextually rather than through fixed boundaries suggests a broader framework for understanding structures of porous identity (42). Yet Japanese uncanny narratives remain distinctive in their aesthetic restraint.

Snow, Silence, and Secrecy in "Yuki-Onna"

The tale of Yuki-Onna unfolds with meteorological stillness. A snowstorm confines two woodcutters, the elder Mosaku and the younger Minokichi, to a mountain hut. During the night, a woman formed from snow enters silently, bends over the sleeping bodies, and exhales a deathly breath that freezes the old man where he lies. When she turns toward the younger man, however, she pauses. His youth moves her to mercy. She spares him on a condition that he must never speak of what he has seen - "I intended to treat you like the other man. But I cannot help feeling some pity for you,- because you are so young.... You are a pretty boy, Minokichi; and I will not hurt you now. But, if you ever tell anybody - even your own mother - about what you have seen this night, I shall know it; and then I will kill you.... Remember what I say!" (Hearn 113). If he tells anyone, she warns, she will return and kill him. This conditional intimacy structures the tale. The encounter is neither seduction nor assault, rather it is a contract forged at protecting the existence. The snow-woman's power lies not in her supernatural lethality but in her demand for silence. Her survival requires secrecy. Years later, Minokichi marries a mysterious woman named O-Yuki. She is gentle, and strangely untouched by the hardships of rural life. She bears children, manages the household, and ages with uncanny slowness. The domestic sphere appears stable. Yet the narrative repeatedly marks her difference by referring her skin remains pale, she dislikes cold air, avoids certain forms of disclosure. The everyday rhythms of marriage and childcare conceal an unresolved in-between space. One night, moved by affection and nostalgia, Minokichi recounts the snow-woman incident to his wife. As he speaks, her face changes. The story he narrates is the revelation that destroys the domestic order he inhabits. O-Yuki reveals herself to be the snow-woman and declares that only the presence of their children prevents her from killing him. She vanishes into the night, dissolving back into snowfall.

The uncanny force of the narrative resides with the sense of protecting secret in the form of intimacy. The marriage is sustained by silence. The wife is not an intruder but the reappearance of an earlier encounter in altered form. The domestic interior thus becomes the stage upon which the repressed returns in intimate disguise - "The uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and

long familiar." (Freud 124). Sigmund Freud further clarifies the mechanism, "This uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old - established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (148). The shift from snow-woman to spouse collapses the boundary between the strange and the familiar, rendering the home uncanny. Yet the terror is not sudden. The terror unfolds through recognition. O-Yuki has always been both wife and the other. The uncanny resides in delayed comprehension, in the realization that intimacy has always harbored alterity. Revelation violates the pact. The violation of silence does not only create a necessity to reveal truth; it also dissolves the conditions under which difference could be accommodated. The domestic order collapses because the fragile terms of coexistence are breached.

Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection helps explain the unsettling affect produced by the snow-woman's presence - "The abject has only one quality of the object - that of being opposed to I" (Kristeva 1). This establishes abjection as a threat to subjecthood. The abject disturbs identity by exposing the instability of bodily boundaries, "Filth is not a quality in itself… it applies only to what relates to a boundary" (Kristeva 69). Yuki-Onna's unsettling presence similarly derives from boundary instability rather than grotesque excess. Her body is neither fully material nor immaterial. She is cold yet animate, visible yet dissolving, her breath freezes and her touch annihilates warmth. She embodies the border between life and nonlife. Coldness functions as an abject marker while warmth signifies vitality in human community. There is a blend of ecological embodiment with permeable Worlds. The snow-woman does not violate bodily integrity through violence; she unsettles it through dissolution. Her breath transforms vitality into stillness, rendering death atmospheric rather than corporeal. The terror she produces therefore belongs to the domain of abjection - an encounter with the fragile, where life yields to elemental cold.

Rather than representing nature as inert backdrop, the tale presents weather as an active agent through which presence becomes perceptible, suggesting a cosmology in which the human, the natural, and the spiritual remain continuous rather than divided. The tale refuses a rigid separation between natural environment and supernatural agency. Yuki-Onna becomes

visible only through "snow-light" as the storm forces open the hut door, and her lethal breath appears as "bright white smoke", rendering death an atmospheric process rather than a bodily assault (Hearn 113). When she departs, she does not exit the landscape but "vanishes into the snow" (Hearn 118). The narrative thus collapses distinctions between weather and body[i]. Snow is not background scenery but medium, and the storm enables her manifestation. Yuriko Saito's discussion of Japanese aesthetics emphasizes attentiveness to transience and imperfection as intrinsic to beauty (Saito 383). Yuki-Onna's presence is defined by ephemerality: she appears in snowfall, lives within domestic temporality, and dissolves again into winter air. Her beauty is inseparable from impermanence. This aesthetic sensibility intensifies the uncanny rather than mitigating it. The snow-woman is not grotesque; she is luminously fragile. Her disappearance leaves an affective residue where absence becomes the haunting[ii].

Hunger and the Hidden Mouth: "Futakuchi Onna" and the Abject Economy of Appetite

Among the most unsettling figures in Japanese uncanny lore is the Futakuchi Onna ("two-mouthed woman"), a domestic figure whose horror also emerges through concealment. She appears as the ideal wife - quiet, frugal, and eating almost nothing. Yet rice vanishes daily from the household store. Suspicions lead to revelation. In widely circulated Edo-period variants, the husband secretly observes his wife and discovers that her hair parts to reveal a second mouth at the back of her head, which cries out for food and devours rice with insatiable hunger. The uncanny resides in disclosure of the fact that what appears orderly conceals a devouring excess within the domestic body.

Although "Futakuchi Onna" circulates primarily through oral narrative and yōkai compendia rather than a single canonical literary text, Noriko T. Reider situates such devouring female figures within a broader cultural logic in which monstrous women embody social anxiety, marginalization, and survival tensions. Mountain women (yamauba), for example, are said to consume unsuspecting passers-by, reflecting fears surrounding exclusion, hunger, and the precarious conditions of subsistence (Reider 181). Futakuchi Onna belongs to this continuum of

figures through which appetite, marginality, and social unease become narratable.

Futakuchi Onna's second mouth opens where the body should remain sealed. The body ceases to function as a coherent organism and instead becomes a disturbing visual imagination. The hidden mouth confuses nourishment and devouring, restraint and excess, domestic order and bodily need. The mouth is an organ mediating intake and expulsion. Its multiplication renders appetite autonomous. Hair culturally coded as feminine beauty, and in the story of Futakuchi Onna it animates to feed the second mouth where bodily unity disintegrates. Nourishment becomes compulsion. The tale gains clarity when situated within agrarian economies structured by scarcity and labour discipline. In such contexts, food distribution and consumption were moral as well as material concerns. Reider observes that supernatural figures often materialize tensions embedded in everyday social life. Futakuchi Onna's hidden appetite echoes anxieties surrounding resource depletion, household survival, and the regulation of women's labor and consumption.

The figure embodies a paradox as she appears as the ideal frugal wife yet harbours an appetite that threatens domestic stability. The hidden mouth literalizes what patriarchal domestic order attempts to regulate (such as female hunger, bodily need, and claims upon sustenance). The uncanny emerges when the ideology of restraint confronts the reality of biological demand. Futakuchi Onna reveals an economy in which hunger circulates beneath the surface of domestic order. The visible wife consumes nothing; the invisible mouth consumes everything. This split dramatizes the tension between normative femininity and biological need. The young female character tests the ethics of sustenance. Her story materializes an abject economy of appetite as a system in which hunger must remain invisible in order for domestic order to appear stable. When the hidden mouth becomes visible, the illusion of containment collapses.

Maruyama Ōkyo and the Intimate Apparition

A comparable visual articulation of intimate haunting appears in Maruyama Ōkyo's "The Ghost of Oyuki" (c. 1750), where a female apparition emerges in attenuated form, her lower body dissolving into emptiness. The painting visualizes the uncanny

not as violent intrusion but as the return of intimate presence, suspended between memory and embodiment. Ōkyo's Ghost of Oyuki offers a visual analogue to the domestic uncanny explored in Japanese folk narratives. The apparition's partially dissolved body destabilizes the boundary between presence and absence, rendering the figure neither fully material nor entirely immaterial. The figure's attenuated form, limp hands, and dissolving lower body render presence as incomplete embodiment. Rather than dramatizing horror, the painting stages a quiet return. It is a presence that seems to arise from memory rather than invasion. The ghost does not enter the domestic sphere; she appears to have never fully left it. This visual logic parallels the narrative structure of figures such as Yuki-Onna, whose return collapses distinctions between intimacy and estrangement, life and afterlife, dwelling and haunting.

Ōkyo's ghost is believed to represent a beloved seen in a dream; Yuki-Onna returns as wife and mother before revealing her supernatural identity. In each case, the uncanny emerges through the return of intimate presence rather than the arrival of the monstrous. Visually and narratively, the body dissolves at the point where memory and presence intersect. The lower half of Ōkyo's ghost fades into emptiness; Yuki-Onna dissolves into snow. Embodiment is suspended rather than terminated.

Serpent, Seclusion, and Subversive Intimacy in *Nāga-Mandala*

Girish Karnad's *Nāga-Mandala* (Play with a Cobra) transforms an oral folktale into a theatrical meditation on desire, marital authority, and the instability of identity within domestic life. Rani's marriage to Appanna converts the household into a carceral interior. Locked inside during the day and denied companionship, she inhabits a space that is simultaneously shelter and prison. Karnad's staging underscores the paradox. The home, culturally idealized as a site of protection, becomes an institution of isolation. Domestic produces silence, and silence becomes the condition in which the uncanny can emerge.

The cobra's nocturnal visits to Rani arise within an intimate enclosure, mimicking the husband's form. When Appanna's demeanor shifts at night, Rani registers the transformation -

"You were so different yesterday… you spoke so kindly." (Karnad 233) Does the line register fear or cognitive dissonance? We find the fractures of identity within familiarity. The domestic interior reveals itself as a space capable of hosting multiple presences. The cobra articulates the temporal logic structuring this dual existence, "The husband decides on the day visits. And the wife decides on the night visits." (Karnad 236) Day and night divide public duty from emotional and erotic fulfilment. Marriage becomes temporally bifurcated - daylight sustains patriarchal authority; night permits affective reciprocity. This temporal split does more than enabling deception. It reveals that conjugal identity is already structured by asymmetry. The cobra's visits expose the insufficiency of marital life.

A. K. Ramanujan's reflections on the structures of folktale is important in terms of understanding cultural logic. He observes that the Indian self is relational rather than singular, constituted through roles and contexts (Ramanujan 42). Within this structure, one may "live simultaneously in several worlds and operate in each according to its own logic" (Ramanujan 45). Folktale worlds therefore permit distinct orders of reality to intersect "without anxiety" (Ramanujan 47). The cobra's assumption of Appanna's form expresses relational multiplicity. Rani's experience unfolds across overlapping realities of social marriage, emotional intimacy, and mythic presence. Ramanujan further notes that folktale truths are context-sensitive rather than absolute (50). This epistemology becomes crucial in understanding the play's climactic oath.

In South Asian imaginations, *nāgas* are beings associated with subterranean realms, fertility, water, and cyclical renewal. Their presence marks phases of transformation. Karnad mobilizes this symbolic reservoir to reconfigure marital sexuality. The serpent-lover does not represent illicit desire; he restores vitality where patriarchal neglect has produced sterility. Rani's emotional and bodily awakening unfolds through nocturnal encounters that are tender rather than violent. When she later insists, "I was never alone. Someone was always with me." (Karnad 247) - she asserts an experiential truth that exceeds social recognition. Presence here is relational rather than juridical. Pregnancy, in this context, signifies restoration. Fertility emerges through mythic mediation. A distinctive feature of *Nāga-Mandala* is its framing device. Stories within the primary story finds their

narrators. Flames become storytellers there, and narrative acquires agency. This meta-theatrical structure foregrounds the relationship between voice and survival. Stories persist by being told; women survive by being heard. Rani begins as voiceless, confined within domestic silence. Through narrative and ordeal, she becomes the central speaking subject whose words determine living truth. Karnad thus links feminine speech with narrative endurance.

Rani's pregnancy provokes communal judgment. Patriarchal authority demands proof of fidelity. She undergoes the snake ordeal, placing her hand into the cobra's nest and swearing

"If I have touched any man other than my husband and this cobra, let the snake bite me." (Karnad 252) The oath destabilizes binary truth structures. By invoking both husband and cobra, Rani articulates layered truth consistent with folktale epistemology. Ramanujan's observation that folktales accommodate context-dependent truths clarifies the logic at work here (Ramanujan 50). The cobra does not harm her. Mythic logic intervenes in juridical authority, compelling the community to accept her testimony. That is why identity in the play is relational - not fixed but substitutive. Rather than punishing desire, the play reconfigures marital ethics. The serpent, rather than destroying the household, enables its transformation. The community adjusts. The uncanny becomes a mode through which rigid structures soften, allowing relational life to continue. In this sense, *Nāga-Mandala* does not resolve contradiction but inhabits it.

The Edible Body and the Substitute Self: Abanindranath Tagore's *Khirer Putul*

Abanindranath Tagore's *Khirer Putul* ("The Doll of Condensed Milk"), first published in 1896, reworks a Bengali folk motif in which an edible figure mediates domestic injustice and emotional deprivation. The tale opens with a sharply asymmetrical royal household. The king possesses two queens - the favoured Suo-Rani and the neglected Duo-Rani. The narrative emphasizes this imbalance through spatial imagery. While the favoured queen occupies luxurious palaces and gardens, the neglected queen inhabits a marginal domestic corner, surrounded by poverty and silence. The disparity is not merely material but affective at the

same time - the king's attention circulates exclusively around one household while the other remains invisible.

Within this domestic economy of neglect, the narrative introduces an extraordinary substitute object. The monkey, one of the tale's trickster figures, proposes the creation of a doll fashioned from condensed milk. The instruction appears simple yet symbolically charged -"Cook the milk slowly till it thickens, and shape from it a little doll - white and delicate as the moon." (Abanindranath Tagore, 29) The doll emerges as a fragile body composed entirely of nourishment. Milk, a substance associated with maternal care and sustenance, is transformed into anthropomorphic form. The resulting object occupies a strange ontological position - it is neither fully animate nor entirely inert. Its existence destabilizes the boundary between food and body, nourishment and personhood.

Freud's reflections on uncanny objects illuminate this effect. In "The Uncanny", he identifies dolls and automatons as privileged sites where the boundary between animate and inanimate becomes unstable, producing a peculiar cognitive unease - "Dolls, waxwork figures and automatons… awaken the impression that they may come to life." (Freud 135) The milk doll in Tagore's narrative exemplifies precisely this phenomenon. Although initially inert, it functions narratively as a proxy self for the neglected queen. Through the doll, the queen acquires symbolic presence within a courtly structure that has erased her visibility. The doll thus mediates affective recognition. It is through this substitute body that the queen's marginality becomes narratable.

The material composition of the doll intensifies the uncanny dimension. Unlike wooden or porcelain dolls, the milk doll is edible. Its substance belongs simultaneously to nourishment and embodiment. The substitution performed by the doll also reflects the narrative logic of many South Asian folktales classified within the international tale type ATU 459 ("The Make-Believe Child"), where artificial figures are created to simulate human presence. Variants of this tale type occur across India and other parts of Asia, indicating a widespread folkloric pattern in which fabricated bodies mediate social anxieties about legitimacy, reproduction, and domestic status.

Animated Objects and Spirit Presence: Ningyō and the Uncanny Object-Body

Japanese folklore preserves a long tradition in which dolls are understood not merely as toys but as vessels capable of absorbing human presence. The word *ningyō* literally means 'human form', suggesting that the doll already occupies a space between representation and embodiment. Within ritual practice, dolls are often treated as substitutes for the human body, absorbing illness, or misfortune before being discarded or ritually released. This substitutional function appears prominently in purification rites such as hina-nagashi, where paper dolls are set afloat on rivers to carry away impurities.

The animistic logic underlying these practices reflects a psychology in which material objects may acquire vitality through contact with human emotion and ritual intention. Dolls therefore function as bodies or objects capable of holding traces of human presence without being fully human themselves. Folkloric narratives sometimes push this logic further by depicting dolls that appear to possess consciousness or memory. One well-known example is the legend of "Okiku Ningyō", a doll preserved at Mannen-ji temple in Hokkaido whose hair is believed to grow continuously. According to the story, the doll was originally owned by a young girl named Okiku who died unexpectedly; after her death, the doll's hair began lengthening as though animated by the child's lingering spirit. Whether interpreted as miracle or legend, the narrative expresses a widespread belief that objects intimately associated with human affection may retain a trace of the person who once cherished them. The doll appears almost alive, yet not fully so. The observer oscillates between recognizing it as object and perceiving it as body.

The ningyō tradition demonstrates that this ambiguity is psychological and culturally structured. Dolls frequently serve as substitute bodies within Japanese ritual life. In purification ceremonies, a doll absorbs defilement on behalf of the human subject; in memorial practices, it may preserve the emotional trace of the deceased. Objects thus become containers for human presence.

A different yet related form of doll symbol appears in the traditions surrounding hina dolls, displayed during the festival

of Hinamatsuri (Girls' Day). Historically, hina dolls originated as ritual substitutes designed to absorb misfortune on behalf of young girls. Early forms of the ritual involved paper or straw dolls that were touched to the body and then set adrift on water, carrying away illness and spiritual pollution. The dolls thus functioned as surrogate bodies, temporarily bearing the vulnerabilities of the human subject before being removed from the domestic space.

Intimacy and the Porous Human

Across the narratives examined in this study, the uncanny does not erupt through spectacular violence or overt supernatural invasion. Instead, it emerges through quiet rearrangements within the intimate sphere of everyday life. The stories considered here reveal a recurring narrative strategy that may be described as mythopoeic substitution. Rather than presenting social tensions directly, folklore transforms them into substitute bodies capable of inhabiting the domestic sphere without immediately disrupting it. Snow becomes woman; hunger becomes a second mouth; a serpent becomes a lover; nourishment becomes a doll; and objects shaped in human likeness become vessels of memory or spirit. What binds these substitutions together is the peculiar permeability of the spaces in which they occur. The home, which modern sensibility often imagines as a secure boundary separating the familiar from the unknown, appears in these narratives as a far more porous environment. Doors remain closed, yet spirits enter; marriages appear stable, yet identities divide; objects lie still, yet memory moves within them. The supernatural in such narratives therefore appears less as a separate domain than as an intensification of the natural world's latent vitality.

Yet the comparative dimension of this study demonstrates that the logic of substitution extends far beyond a single cultural context. The serpent-lover of South Asian folklore, the edible doll of Abanindranath Tagore's *Khirer Putul*, and the spirit-bearing dolls of Japanese ningyō traditions - reveal different ways in which narrative imagination negotiates the limits of the human. These stories stage encounters with forms of life that lie just beyond the categories through which human societies organize experience. To live within such worlds requires a capacity to

coexist with ambiguity. In this sense, folklore preserves a quiet philosophical intuition that the boundaries separating human beings from animals, spirits, landscapes, and objects are neither absolute nor permanent. They are provisional lines drawn across a reality that remains fundamentally relational. At such moments the familiar worlds do not disappear - they become deeper than it first appeared.

End Notes

[i] Hiroshige's paintings of winter landscapes also do not treat snow just as a backdrop. Snow absorbs sound, softens architecture, and reshapes spatial perception. Figures appear diminished, suspended within atmospheric stillness. Weather becomes the primary agent shaping experience. In Evening Snow at Kanbara, houses and travellers seem enveloped by snowfall rather than situated within it. Snow reorganizes the environment, transforming space into a muted field of presence. Human movement slows; sound is absorbed; the world appears hushed and suspended. This aesthetic logic resonates with the conditions of Yuki-Onna's manifestation. She appears in 'snow-light' as the storm forces open the hut door (Hearn 113). Visibility itself is mediated through weather.

[ii] Himalayan folklore across Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, and Sikkim preserves narratives in which mountain weather is animated by spirit presence. Ethnographic accounts describe female apparitions encountered in snowstorms or high passes, often associated with sacred terrain, death, or supernatural guardianship. These figures are not understood as intrusions into the natural world but as manifestations of landscape power. See O. C. Handa, *Nanda Devi Raj Jat: Himalayan Pilgrimage* (New Delhi: Indus, 2004); William S. Sax, *Mountain Goddess: Gender and Politics in a Himalayan Pilgrimage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Toni Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain: Popular Pilgrimage and Visionary Landscape in Southeast Tibet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993). For regional folklore documenting spirit women and mountain presences in Himalayan oral traditions, see H. S. Saklani, *Folklore of Kumaon* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing, 1989), and K. C. Baral and G. B. Subba, *Himalayan Cultures and Traditions* (New Delhi: Adroit, 2005).

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